



WASHINGTON STATE
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE
Governor's Salmon
Recovery Office

Governor's Salmon Strategy Update

Why Are Salmon in Trouble?

As Washington's cities grew, many of the places salmon call home were damaged. Rivers were blocked, water was polluted, and food sources were removed.

Today, 15 species of salmon are listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Despite decades of work to recover salmon, more than 70 percent of the listed salmon and steelhead are not keeping pace with recovery, are in crisis, or require immediate action.

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*Photograph from the National Oceanic
and Atmospheric Administration*

Securing a Future for People and Salmon in Washington

The federal government listed the first salmon populations in Washington under the Endangered Species Act in 1991. Those listings set off a series of actions, including the creation of the first statewide strategy to recover salmon, "Extinction is not an Option." Written in 1999, that plan has served as the foundation to the state's recovery efforts. Now, two decades later, the State is using the lessons learned, the emerging challenges, and the best science to update the plan to lead Washington for the next 20 years and beyond.

The plan envisions a future with healthy and resilient salmon, steelhead, and trout runs, restored to harvestable levels across the state. To achieve that, the updated strategy makes the following recommendations:

Recommendations

1. Protect and restore vital salmon habitat
2. Invest in clean water infrastructure for salmon and people
3. Correct fish passage barriers and restore salmon access to historical habitat
4. Build climate resiliency
5. Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery
6. Address predation and food web issues for salmon
7. Enhance commitments and coordination across agencies and programs
8. Strengthen science, monitoring, and accountability

To implement the recommendations, the plan includes a series of initiatives and actions items listed on the next page. The full plan is available online at <https://rco.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/GSRO-GovSalmonStrategy-2021.pdf>

Securing a Future for People and Salmon in Washington

1 Protect and Restore Vital Salmon Habitat

- Better enforce and expand land use regulatory protections for habitat
- Establish a statewide approach for fully functioning riparian habitat
- Establish a permanent funding source to fully fund salmon recovery plans
- Improve habitat conditions on agricultural lands to support salmon recovery
- Maintain and improve the Forest and Fish Agreement to support salmon recovery

2 Invest in Clean Water Infrastructure for Salmon and People

- Improve stormwater management to support salmon recovery
- Improve wastewater management to achieve clean water for salmon and people

3 Correct Fish Passage Barriers and Restore Salmon Access to Historical Habitat

- Correct all state-owned fish passage barriers that impede recovery
- Correct non state-owned fish passage barriers that impede recovery
- Increase access to historic salmon habitat, which includes reintroducing salmon above blocked areas by dams, culverts, undersized bridges, or other barriers

4 Build Climate Resiliency

- Improve the adaptive capacity of natural systems so they can absorb increasing stresses from climate change
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, expand programs to sequester carbon and improve habitat conditions
- Ensure clean, cold water in streams and rivers in the future with a changing climate

5 Align Harvest, Hatcheries, and Hydropower with Salmon Recovery

- Maintain and support co-manager processes for hatchery management to better align with salmon recovery
- Maintain and support co-manager processes for harvest management to align with salmon recovery
- Align hydropower with salmon recovery

6 Address Predation and Food Web Issues for Salmon

- Address predatory issues in the Columbia River, Puget Sound, and the Washington Coast
- Increase forage fish populations in Puget Sound

7 Enhance Commitments and Coordination Across Agencies and Programs

- Make sure agencies are coordinating activities across habitat, hatcheries, hydropower, harvest, and predation
- Align state agency salmon recovery budget and policy priorities with recovery plans

8 Strengthen Science, Monitoring, and Accountability

- Establish an independent science adviser panel to coordinate a statewide science, monitoring, accountability, and adaptive management approach for salmon recovery
- Secure funding for monitoring, accountability, communication, and adaptive management
- Improve communication and coordination